



Jane Swift
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Commissioner

Fall 2001

MCDHH NEWS

A Publication of the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Partnership with the Department of Education (DOE)

by Barbara Jean Wood, Commissioner

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July 2001 - both MCDHH and DOE signed a memo of understanding to address three initiatives concerning the shortfall of educational resources serving Deaf and hard of hearing children. With a start-up fund of \$150,000, we will be working on the following major focus areas:

Update the 1989 Educational Guidelines which outlines strategies and alternatives for school systems to use in the education of Deaf and hard of hearing children.

The first thing we would like to do is to update the previously published Educational Guidelines. This nationally-recognized booklet has been available since 1989 to school system administrators across the Commonwealth who have Deaf and/or hard of hearing children in their schools. The information and resources need to be reviewed to ensure accuracy and in addition, new sections need to be written relative to finding and hiring qualified staff and how parents can play an important role in their child's educational success.

Assess the performance fluency (ASL, Signed English, Oral English) and skill competency of educational interpreters/translators.

In order to address the shortage of qualified educational interpreters we must first work with the interpreters who currently work in kindergarten to high-school (K-12) school settings by assessing their proficiency level, providing them useful feedback, guidance and support in order to prepare them for their national certification test. But before we begin such tasks, we need to first determine all of the available resources that will assist educational interpreters accomplish their language fluency goals.

MCDHH will coordinate assistance from state-based interpreter training programs, the Massachusetts Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MassRID), as well as mentoring programs for a collaborative effort to identify training opportunities for these interpreters or if necessary to create such opportunities to be available for both current and future school interpreters.

Assess the communication proficiency skills of teachers working with Deaf and hard of hearing children.

Very often the administrators of mainstream schools who are responsible for educating Deaf and hard of hearing students asked for an assessment tool that can be used to evaluate the signed/oral communication proficiency skill of their teachers since they don't know what to look for when hiring staff or improving the current teacher's ability to work with these students. Often the only requirement for the teacher who works with Deaf and hard of hearing students is to have had training and a background in "deafness". Current and new teachers are rarely required to pass a signed/oral English communication proficiency test.

Before recommending any tests that are available, we need to meet with teacher preparation programs to gather input as to what is required of them and how they can ensure that their graduates can pass this kind of assessment before their graduation. Then we also need an assessment tool for existing teachers who now work in the school system with Deaf and hard of hearing students.

This new endeavor by these two state agencies will bring together the experience and expertise of those involved in these issues so that we can better serve the school systems who in turn serve our Deaf and hard of hearing students. The Massachusetts Department of Education and the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing look forward to working with many of you (parents, interpreters, school administrators, state employees, and teacher trainers) to create and promote equal educational opportunities and a validated signed/oral language environment model for Deaf and hard of hearing students in schools across the Commonwealth. ■

Enjoy

THE
NEW
ENGLAND
FALL
FOLIAGE



Commissioner's Corner

by Barbara Jean Wood, Commissioner

As MCDHH prepares to celebrate its 15th anniversary of service to Deaf, late deafened and hard of hearing citizens of our Commonwealth this year, we hope you will come visit our open house and learn what you can do to make your own town/city accessible for Deaf and hard of hearing residents. We have grown tremendously from our meager beginnings of 2 staff in a large room without any office partitions in 1986 to a staff of 75 in four regional offices – Boston, Plymouth, Springfield, Worcester – with future expansion planned for an office and staff in Pittsfield.

This fall, there will be other celebrations around New England including the Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf (MSAD) Convention & 25th Anniversary party to be held at the Brookline Holiday Inn on September 22, 2001, the Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA) will have its next conference in Newport, Rhode Island from October 31 to November 4, 2001, and the New England Homes for the Deaf will honor 100 years of service to the elderly Deaf of our community on November 10, 2001. (Please refer to Deborah Porter's article, "Celebrating Milestones" on page 5 for more information.)

Make plans now to join me in participating in these historic events as we individually and collectively celebrate the efforts of past and current leaders, our political achievements, community growth, and advancement of our quality of life. ■



We are on TV!

by Jonathan O'Dell, Director, CATTS

MCDHH has embarked on an exciting media campaign to raise awareness of hearing loss and the availability of our and other



Water Cooler

services to those living with it. Toward that end, we contracted with a media productions group to produce two Public Service Announcements, which should be coming to your television set in the next few weeks. Mr. Philip Scribner Balboni, President of New England Cable News, has generously pledged his support in providing us air-time for the PSA, as well as providing a link to



Park Bench

MCDHH on NECN's website (www.NECN.com). We would like to publicly express our thanks to Mr. Balboni, and invite other media sponsors to join

in our effort to spread our message to the half million citizens of the Commonwealth living with hearing loss. ■

Managing Results Initiative

by James O'Donnell, Deputy Commissioner, Policy & Programs

Governor Swift and Administration Secretary Crosby have issued a challenge to the agencies of the state government that is keeping the staff at MCDHH busy this summer: looking at what we do and how we do it, can it be done in a better, more efficient way?

This is the basic purpose behind the Managing Results Initiative (MRI): a statewide effort to examine each agency's mission, goals and services to get ideas from employees who know best what they do and how to improve it. The kickoff was July 19th as "Lead Teams" from all agencies gathered to see the outline of the initiative. Representing the Commission was Commissioner BJ Wood, Deputy Commissioner Kim Egan, Administration and Finance, and myself. We saw a very thoughtful and well prepared outline of the strategy and timetable for involving employees at every level. This goal to include all employees in this review process is designed to tap into their ideas.

After setting out the mission and goals of the commission, a pool of facilitators is to be picked to solicit employee involvement in the MRI and act as liaisons among the members of the lead team, managers and employees. Those discussions will hopefully lead to some positive ideas to change the operations and improve our services.

The time table to accomplish all this is short: recommendations from all of these discussions need to be reviewed and approved the lead team by mid October 2001. But the most important element of all this is the final step: implementation. A survey of employees statewide found that all too often in the past, employees did not share their ideas because they, the employees, believe that their ideas will not be considered seriously. This new mechanism is a communication tool to draw out those ideas by creating an environment where employees feel secure in expressing them. That's why the manager in charge of the unit or particular activity does not participate in the discussions led by the facilitators.

This is an exciting process and we all look forward to the input from staff that will generate a whole list of possibilities to improve services and make it more efficient. More to come on this remarkable process. ■

Regulation and Legislative Update: August 2001

by Jeannine Dusombre, Legal Counsel to the Commissioner

Here is a brief list of some legislation the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) is following for this legislative session.

2001-2002 House & Senate Bills of Interest and Support to the MCDHH

<i>Bill Number & Name</i>	<i>Update</i>	<i>Summary</i>
<u>S. 735</u> (Senator Brewer)	Reported favorably and sent to Senate Ways and Means	Provides insurance coverage for cost of two hearing aids every three years.
<u>S. 759</u> (Senator Moore)	Reported favorably and sent to Senate Ways and Means	Requires insurance providers to pay for the cost of providing competent interpreter services.
<u>S. 1585</u> (Senator Morrissey)	Bill reported favorably and sent to the committee on <u>Senate Steering and Policy</u> .	Allow access for people raising or training Service Dogs to assist people with disabilities.
<u>H. 2137</u> (Rep. Patricia Jehlen)	Calls for certifying teachers and Educational Interpreters Placed in a Study Order on 7/9/01	Will ensure that all teachers and educational Interpreters for Deaf and hard of hearing students be certified.
<u>H. 2138</u> (Rep. Patricia Jehlen)	Educational "bill of rights"	Establishes a Bill of Right for children who are Deaf and hard of hearing in educational settings to meet their communication needs.
<u>H. 2160</u> (Rep. Patricia Jehlen)	Establishes Board of Registration	Provides for the Registration of Sign Language Interpreters.
<u>H. 2481</u> (Rep. Balser) <u>S. 310</u> (Senator Murray) <u>S. 332</u> (Senator Tolman)	Maintains MFB	Bills prevent any change in the state standard form from Maximum Feasible Benefit (MFB) to Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This would reverse the change to FAPE effective January 2002.
<u>S. 229</u> (Senator Antonioni)	Delays change of MFB	Delays change of the state standard from Maximum Feasible Benefit to Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) until the Federal Department of Education verifies that Massachusetts is in full compliance with federal law (IDEA) and that the state has corrected identified areas of non-compliance.
<u>H. 988</u> (Rep. Wolf) <u>S. 333</u> (Senator Tolman)	Delays change of MFB	Delays change of the state standard from MFB to FAPE until the MCAS passage rates for children with disabilities do not demonstrate disparate impact.

Special Education Hearing:

Rescheduled hearings on all Special Education legislation will be held on Wednesday, September 12 at 10 AM, State House, Boston, in Gardner Auditorium.

Other News of Interest: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)

The MBTA will be installing LED passenger information signs at all 64-commuter rail stations. The "T" reports that the new LED signs will allow commuter rail customers, including those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, to get up-to-date information about any service delays, schedule changes, fares, pass sales, and other information.

The installation of the new signs is expected to be finished in December 2001. ■

Assistive Listening Systems (ALS): A Sound Investment

by Carole Rossick, Hard of Hearing Outreach Specialist

What does the Fleet Center, the State House, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Huntington Theatre, Bridgewater State College, the Town of Medford and the First United Methodist Church in Hamilton have in common? They are among the requests received over the years by the CATTS Department for technical assistance and information related to Assistive Listening System, (ALS). As a result of our involvement, these facilities have added, or, are in the process of upgrading their existing assistive listening system. They actively promote the availability and benefits of ALS to their general audience. This is encouraging news to those of us who can benefit from amplification in large gatherings and public places. Best of all, these entities are among thousands of places of public accommodation and houses of worship equipped with ALS.

Who are the people that use an Assistive Listening System? Let's meet three of them.

•In May, I visited a national support group's local meeting for people with hearing loss. I observed someone using an audio induction loop ALS for the very first time. This gentleman, a World War II veteran, retired from work in a noisy environment. He was recently fitted with a pair of behind the ear hearing aids. His hearing aids were equipped with the telecoil feature. This feature enabled him to receive sound from electromagnetic field generated by the loop of wire encircling the room. Despite being seated towards the back of the room, he was able to understand clearly the presenter's voice and enjoy the lecture.

•In March while visiting an elementary school, I met a mother who was using an FM ALS microphone the size of a highlighter pen to speak with her daughter. The daughter, a kindergartner, is able to hear her mother (and her teacher) through miniature FM radio receivers, (FM-BTE boots) each about the size of a postage stamp. These tiny receivers attach to a Direct Audio Input connection on her behind the ear hearing aids. She is very comfortable using this technology and is very straightforward in educating her peers and teachers so that they will use the microphone properly to talk with her.

•A hearing spouse found that using an infrared TV assistive

listening system was her best solution to enjoy her cable TV programs in the kitchen. Wearing ALS headphones let her focus on her program while her hard of hearing husband blasts the volume up on the adjacent living room TV so loud that even a neighbor could hear outside.

These three people are using three different ALS technologies. They are among thousands of hard of hearing (and hearing) people who enjoy the sounds of life using assistive listening systems. An Assistive Listening System has the potential to be a sound investment for the facility and for the user. However, public places with Assistive Listening Systems need to publicize their availability. Their staff need training on how to issue and maintain the receivers. Overall, these facilities need to encourage public acceptance and use by their audience to actually experience the joy of listening again.

What about you, the user? Have you done your part to help? Have you ever *tried* using an ALS? Did you ever *ask* to use an ALS receiver, even if it was not publicized? Have you ever expressed your appreciation to a facility that invested in ALS? Would you encourage another site to 'do something' beyond use of a public address system, by contacting MCDHH for technical guidance?

So when was the last time you went to the movies and understood the dialogue? Spent an evening at the theatre using opera glasses, yet heard every whisper uttered on the stage? Participated in your town meeting because you heard the comments and points of view? Cheered at a sporting event because you could understand the spoken play by play? Attended a class lecture where you did not have to strain to understand the teacher? Actually heard the punch line of a joke and enjoyed a hearty laugh with your friends? Followed along, at peace, as you listened to the services held at a house of worship? When was the last time you requested and used an Assistive Listening System receiver? Or, even asked if a facility has an ALS?

Maybe it is time for you to make a sound investment in asking for, and using Assistive Listening Systems in your corner of the world.

For more information about the different assistive listening system technologies, or the hearing aid features mentioned (telecoil, direct audio input), please contact the CATTS Department. ■



The MassRelay Advisory Board is working with an independent agency to create a MassRelay Customer Satisfaction Survey. The purpose of this survey is to see if MassRelay customers are satisfied with the MassRelay services and/or how MassRelay can better meet their needs. MassRelay would appreciate input on how the service is doing.

If you are interested in filling out a Customer Satisfaction Survey, please write, call or e-mail Customer Service with a request to receive a survey. We would also ask if you can give us the names and addresses of two or three businesses that you call through MassRelay (i.e. your doctor's office, kids' school, pizza parlors, etc.) so that we can also send those businesses a survey as well. The survey will be readily available for distribution this autumn.

Please tell all your MassRelay contacts about the survey and invite them to contact us to participate.

MassRelay Customer Service: 1-800-720-3479 (Voice)
1-800-720-3480 (TTY)
CustServ@massrelay.org (e-mail)

Celebrating Milestones

by Deborah M. Porter, Communication Access Trainer

The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing opened its doors in 1986, making this year our 15th anniversary. We are honored to be of service to the Deaf and hard of hearing community. We hope you will continue to support us and give us feedback so that we may continuously improve our services.

MCDHH is not the only agency in Massachusetts that is celebrating a milestone! As you can see elsewhere in this newsletter, the Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf is also celebrating an anniversary (affectionately known as the 25 + 1 year anniversary) by hosting a conference at the Brookline Holiday Inn on September 22.

New England Homes for the Deaf, in Danvers, Massachusetts, has also reached an important milestone. NEHD was founded one hundred years ago, when the Boston Red Sox had their first season! (Yes, the Red Sox are celebrating their 100th season this year, too!) NEHD will have a celebration to honor their 100th anniversary on November 10th. If you would like more information, their website is: www.nehomedeaf.org. According to their website, they are still looking for volunteers to assist with this event!

Elsewhere in the United States and in the world, other agen-

cies and groups are also reaching milestones in their history. The World Federation of the Deaf is celebrating 50 years of service. Their celebration will be held in Rome, Italy, where it was founded, September 27-30. If you would like to learn more about the World Federation of the Deaf, check out the website at www.wfdnews.org.

The National Fraternal Society of the Deaf already had their celebration in May, over Memorial Day weekend. They celebrated their 100-year anniversary by hosting a big gala. An account of the event is noted at www.nfsd.com. Their home office is located in Springfield, Illinois, but they do have a division here in Boston.

Many agencies of and for the Deaf and hard of hearing have celebrations this year. We do not want to overlook two groups that will be having anniversaries soon! An early congratulations to ALDA-the Association for Late Deafened Adults, which will be celebrating 25 years in 2002. Also SHHH-Self Help for Hard of Hearing people, just celebrated their 20th in 1999, and in 2004, will be 25 years old. Congratulations to all. We are proud to be among these other leaders in the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. If you need more information on how to contact any of these agencies, feel free to call us. ■

MCDHH is moving...

by Jonathan O'Dell, Director, CATTS



By the end of September 2001, we will have moved from our current location at 210 South Street in Boston to our new location at 150 Mount Vernon Street in Dorchester.

We realize that all moves are disruptive to some degree. This notice will hopefully minimize any inconvenience to you. We believe the easy access to public transportation and to the state highway system (93 North/South, Route 90), expanded parking, and the increase in workspace for our staff and consumers will all contribute to making your visits to MCDHH more pleasant.

For directions, please look at our website <http://www.state.ma.us/mcdhh/dorchester.htm> ■

NEW RESOURCE DIRECTORY SLATED FOR DISTRIBUTION IN EARLY SPRING 2002!

The popular MCDHH Resource Directory is currently being revised and is scheduled to be available in the Spring of 2002. The Resource Directory is a major source of information related to services for the Deaf, late deafened, and hard of hearing consumer in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Over 5,000 copies of the 1999-2000 edition have been distributed over the past two years, and it has become one of the Commission's most popular publications.

If you would like to have your agency or organization listed in our Directory, please fill out the information slip below and return it to the MCDHH. All agencies and organizations listed will receive a copy of this valuable resource as soon as it is printed.

2002-2004 Resource Directory Information (Please write clearly).

Name of Business/Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Voice _____ TTY _____

E-Mail Address: _____ Fax: _____

Internet Address: _____

Type of Business/Organization (select all that are applicable)

Advocacy__ Associations & Organizations__ Assistive Technology__
Cultural__ Education & Training__ Employment__ Evaluation Services__
Information & Referral__ Interpreter/CART Services__ Legal Services__
Mental Health__ Mental Retardation__ Other Health Services__ Parents &
Youth__ Senior Resources__ Other_____

Please mail this form to Ray Reed, MCDHH, 150 Mount Vernon Street, Fifth Floor, Boston, MA 02125 or fax it to his attention at (617) 740-1699.

Fair Housing

by Barbara Chandler, Policy Analyst, Office of Civil Rights - City of Boston

Fair housing is a term that is frequently used, but rarely defined. Fair housing is equal access to housing opportunities as well as the prohibition of discriminatory practices. Under the federal Fair Housing Act, Massachusetts Chapter 151B and the Boston Fair Housing Commission (BFHC) law, housing discrimination in most circumstances is forbidden. The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and disability. Chapter 151B and BFHC law provide fair housing protection to these classes but also include age, military status, ancestry and sexual orientation. The statutes refer to these categories as protected classes. Housing activities covered by the Act, Chapter 151B and the BFHC law include selling, renting or mortgage lending. In the sale or rental of property, the property owner or their agent may not engage in discriminatory practices by refusing to rent, sell or negotiate housing, establish different terms, conditions or privileges for renting, steer persons to other housing or deny that housing is available based on one's protected class status listed above.

In addition to what is described above, the Fair Housing Act, Chapter 151B and the BFHC law offers specific protections to persons with disabilities, including individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the federal agency with the responsibilities of the enforcement of the Fair Housing Act, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, the state enforcement agency for Chapter 151B, and the BFHC, the enforcement agency for the City of Boston, use the same definition of disability as in Sec. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. This means you are covered if you have a disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities or have a record of such a disability or are regarded as having such a disability. These protections are also extended to someone who is associated with someone who has a disability.

Under the Fair Housing Act, a landlord may not refuse a person with a disability from making necessary reasonable modifications to their dwelling or common areas at the tenant's expense. For example, if a tenant who is Deaf wishes to install a flashing doorbell, they may do so, but at their own expense. A landlord can request that the tenant remove such modifications when they move from the property. Chapter 151B offers the provision of reasonable modifications, however, in the case of publicly assisted housing, multiple dwelling housing consisting of ten or more units, or contiguously located housing of ten or more units, the owner assumes the expense of reasonable modification costs. In housing of privately owned housing of less than ten units, the tenant with the disability assumes the reasonable modifications costs. Chapter 151B also covers the listing of accessible units. When an accessible unit becomes vacant, the owner must notify anyone, who within the last year has expressed an interest in such a unit. The owner must also list the vacant accessible unit with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's central registry of accessible units for fifteen days. This registry is better known as the Mass Access Program, presently administered by the Citizens Housing and Planning Association.

Landlords cannot refuse to make reasonable accommodations to their rules, policies, procedures and services that are necessary for a person with disability. For example, an interpreter or other means of communication assistance should be provided for a Deaf person to facilitate the negotiation of the lease, if there are video nights held in the community room, only captioned video will be used, etc. Landlords can refuse a reasonable accommodation request if it is by its nature unreasonable or causes an undue hardship.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against in a housing matter, you have the right to file a complaint. Once you have filed, your complaint will be investigated and the validity of the claim is established. Complaints can be resolved through mediation, conciliation or administrative hearings. You can contact the following organizations for assistance in filing a complaint:

Boston Fair Housing Commission
(For Boston complaints only)
City of Boston
One City Hall Plaza, Room 966
Boston, MA 02201
(617) 635-4408 (V)
(617) 635-2541 (TTY)

Massachusetts Commission Against
Discrimination
One Ashburton Place, Room 601
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-3990 (V)
(617) 994-6196 (TTY)

Department of Housing and Urban
Development
Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. Federal Building
10 Causeway St., Room 301
Boston, MA 02222-1092
(800) 669-9777 (V)
(800) 927-9275 (TTY)

Visit our Website:

<http://www.state.ma.us/mcdhh>

Our Email:

MCDHH.Office@state.ma.us

Looking for Work? www.state.ma.us/mcdhh/opportunities.htm

Press Release - MSAD's 25th Anniversary Celebration

by Yvonne Dunkle, Quality Assurance Director

The Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf, Inc. (MSAD) is thrilled to be hosting a biennial Conference along with the MSAD 25th + 1 Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, Sept. 22, 2001. Registration and exhibits will open at 8 am.

The morning and afternoon sessions will be filled with inspiration from keynote speakers: BJ Wood, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Jax Levesque, one of the founding members of MSAD and Past President. This is in addition to community discussions of future endeavors in the areas of Education/Human Services/Civil Rights, Language & Culture/Interpreting, Community Involvement/Youth & Leadership, and Multi-cultural/Deaf-Blind.

The Dingo game will be played after the community discussions; this game is very popular in Deaf Communities across the country. Curious? Come and try a hand at this card game. The games will be followed by a business meeting and board elections. Registration is not required to attend only the business meeting. However, only MSAD members are allowed to vote.

The 25th + 1 Anniversary Celebration will kick off with an evening slide show of MSAD's history since 1975. Six major awards will be presented to deserving winners. Our renowned BJ Wood will guide us through the evening's enjoyable and entertaining shows. Finally, we will have music so that you can dance the night away.

We invite you to come to this Biggest Event of the Year, bringing our heads together for the future of MSAD and the Deaf & hard of hearing communities, to enjoy the competition of the Dingo games and to visit the informative exhibit booths. Don't forget entertainment, awards ceremony, and dancing. Come one and come all for the FUN!

Register Today!

Date: Saturday, September 22, 2001

Time: 8:00am to Midnight

Place: Brookline Holiday Inn
120 Beacon Street, Brookline, MA

Cost: \$50.00 for MSAD members, lunch on your own
\$75.00 for non-members, lunch on your own

(This includes souvenir pin, symposium, banquet, entertainment, awards ceremony and dancing)

Only 250 tickets are available on a first come, first serve basis. Hurry and buy them now. The deadline is September 15, 2001. For registration information, you can check the MSAD website: www.MSAD.org. The registration form can be printed from the website.

Please send your completed registration form along with a check payable to MSAD at 220 Main St., Malden, MA 02148. If you don't have access to the Internet, you can contact the MSAD office at 781-388-9115 (TTY), 781-388-9114 (voice), or 781-388-9015 (Fax) for the registration form. ■

Are you a Deaf or hard of hearing person in need of a better telephone system in order to communicate effectively?

Call Mary Macone at MCDHH to find out if you qualify for a free or low cost TTY or amplified phone through the Verizon distribution program!

(617) 695.7500 Voice

(617) 695.7600 TTY



SUBSCRIPTION FORM

The MCDHH News is published 4 times a year.

If you do not receive the MCDHH News in the mail and would like to, either mail this subscription form or call the CATTS Department at MCDHH and we will gladly add you to our mailing list. Please write legibly.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip Code: _____

Mail this form to: MCDHH, Newsletter Editor, 150 Mount Vernon Street, Fifth Floor, Dorchester, MA 02125

How a Bill becomes a Law in Massachusetts

by Jeannine Dusombre, Legal Counsel to the Commissioner.



The responsibility for enacting laws in Massachusetts rests primarily with the state legislature, formally known as the General Court. It is divided into two branches: a 160-member House of Representatives and a 40-member Senate. The two legislative branches work concurrently on pending legislation brought before them.

➤Petitions, Bills, Resolves, etc., are filed in the clerk of the House (or Senate), assigned a number and title, and sent to an appropriate committee

depending on the subject matter of the proposed legislation.

➤The various committees schedule public hearings for the individual bills

➤Committee members meet at a later time in executive session to review the public testimony and discuss the merits of each bill.

➤The committee then issues its report, recommending that a bill “ought to pass” or “ought not to pass” and the report is submitted to the Clerk’s office. The committee may also recommend that a bill be further studied and placed in a “study order.”

➤Favorably-reported bills receive the First Reading when the committee’s report appears in the Journal of the House or Senate Clerk.

➤If a bill affects the finances of the Commonwealth, it is referred to the Senate or House Committee on Ways and Means after the first reading.

➤Matters not referred to another committee may be placed on the calendar for a second reading after which the Bill is open to debate on amendments and motions.

➤Following debate, a vote is taken and if the bill receives a favorable vote by the membership, it is ordered to a third reading and referred to the Committee on Bills in the Third Reading.

➤The Committee on Bills in the Third Reading examines the bill’s technical points, as well as the legality and constitutionality, and ensures that it does not duplicate or contradict existing law.

➤The committee reports the bill to the House or Senate for its third reading.

➤Following the third reading, the body votes on “passing the bill to be engrossed.”

➤The bill must then pass through three readings and engrossment in the second legislative branch.

➤A vote “to enact” the bill, first in the House and later in the Senate, is the final step in the passage of a bill by the legislature.

➤Following enactment, the bill goes to the governor for signature or veto or take no action.

➤A new law is usually effective in ninety days. Laws considered “emergency” in nature take effect immediately upon signing. ■

WHERE ARE THE OFFICES?

Boston

MCDHH - Administrative & Boston/Northeast Regional Office

210 South Street, fifth floor
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 695.7500 Voice
(617) 695.7600 TTY
(800) 882.1155 Voice
(800) 530.7570 TTY
(617) 695.7599 FAX

Dorchester

MCDHH - Executive Office

150 Mount Vernon Street
Boston, MA 02125
(617) 695.7500 Voice
(617) 695.7600 TTY

Plymouth

MCDHH - Southeast Regional Office

67 Industrial Park Drive
Plymouth, MA 02360
(508) 746.8408 Voice/TTY
(508) 746.8365 FAX

Springfield

MCDHH - Western Regional Office

Springfield State Building
436 Dwight Street, Suite 204
Springfield, MA 01103
(413) 788.6427 Voice/TTY
(413) 731.5177 FAX

Worcester

MCDHH - Central Regional Office

340 Main Street, Suite 700
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 755.4084 Voice/TTY
(508) 752.5441 FAX



Enjoy the Fall Foliage

Address service requested

